



Iron Deficiency Anemia

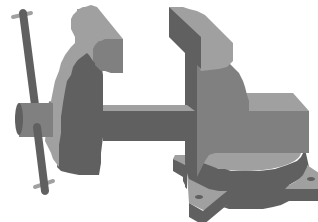
MAJ Niel Johnson, MD

What is iron deficiency anemia?

Iron deficiency anemia is a condition where your blood is low in the mineral iron, which leads to low oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood.

What are the symptoms of iron deficiency anemia?

- fatigue
- looking pale
- early shortness of breath during exercise
- fast heartbeat or palpitations
- chest pain, in elderly people



What causes iron deficiency anemia?

Iron deficiency anemia is usually simply caused by low or inadequate dietary intake of iron, relative to what your body demands.

Do other medical conditions cause this type of anemia?

Yes. Conditions which cause any sort of blood loss, such as normal menstruation, can cause anemia, especially if the periods are unusually heavy or prolonged. Growth spurts, particularly in children around the age of three and teenagers, require lots of vitamins and iron and can cause the body to become low. Breast-feeding and pregnancy demand additional minerals and iron and can lead to low iron supplies in the body. More serious illnesses such as ulcers, cancers and recovery from surgery can lead to chronic blood (and iron) loss.

How is iron deficiency anemia diagnosed?

A history of the above symptoms and risk factors is suggestive of low-iron anemia. The diagnosis can be confirmed by looking at a complete blood count, which will show a low number of red cells. Iron levels can also be done to determine how low your iron supply is.

What is the treatment for iron deficiency anemia?

Low-iron anemia is easily treated by increasing your daily intake of iron.

Are iron pills safe and effective?

Supplementation with iron-rich vitamins is another convenient way to increase your iron level. They are safe and effective if taken in prescribed doses. Common side effects include constipation and stomach upset. Taking iron pills with food will aid their absorption and reduce side effects. DO NOT overuse iron pills, as this may lead to unsafe iron levels in your blood, which can damage your liver.

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What foods are rich in iron?

Natural iron in foods is the best way to supplement all your vitamins and iron.

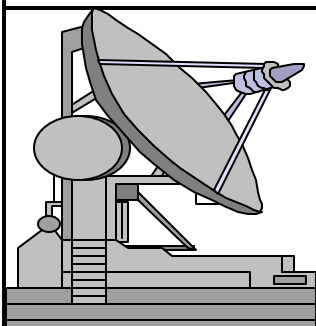
- ✦ liver and other red meats
- ✦ seafood
- ✦ dried fruits, such as apricots, prunes and raisins
- ✦ nuts
- ✦ beans, especially lima beans
- ✦ green leafy vegetables, such as broccoli, parsley and collard greens
- ✦ blackstrap molasses

Remember that the amount of absorbable iron in your foods is

lowered when you overcook them. Raw vegetables are best. Cooking in iron pots and pans can actually increase the iron content in your foods, too.

For what reasons should I follow-up, call the clinic, etc.?

If you are being treated for iron deficiency anemia, you should have your blood count checked periodically to see if the treatment is working. After a month or so, your symptoms should be improving at least a little bit. Worsening fatigue, signs of blood loss or an inability to increase your dietary iron intake may indicate a more serious problem that should be evaluated in the clinic sooner.



This Patient Information Handout is produced by the Directorate of Primary Care Services, Dwight D. Eisenhower Army Medical Center, Ft. Gordon, GA.

Information is current and correct at the time of the last revision. This information sheet is not intended to replace an evaluation by a competent medical provider, but rather to supplement the treatment plan outlined by the patient's health care provider. Moreover, much of the information is intended to be of a general nature and it cannot be assumed that such information will necessarily apply to specific individuals. Opinions and facts do not necessarily reflect that of the United States Government or its subordinate agencies.

Questions, comments and corrections should be forwarded to:

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The Directorate of Primary Care Services

	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Appointments</u>	<u>Messages</u>
Connelly Signal Health Clinic	0600-1600*	787-7300	787-7360
Signal Health Care Clinic #4 (TMC #4)	0600-1600*	787-7300	787-7360
Main Family Practice Clinic	0600-2030	787-7300	787-7360
Internal Medicine Clinic	0800-1600*	787-7300	787-7360
Primary Care Clinic	0800-1600*	787-7300	787-7360

Medication Renewals 787-7360

Pharmacy Direct Refills 787-1710

Emergency Dept. Advice Line	787-5222/6727
Poison Control	1-800-282-5846
Outpatient Pharmacy	787-7010
Labor and Deliver @ MCG	721-2687
Emergency	dial 911
Information Desk @ EAMC	787-5811/4568
TriCare Information Hotline	1-800-333-5331

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Extended Hours Clinic is held at the Main FP Clinic, and is available for all the soldiers, retirees, and family members seen at any of the Directorate of Primary Care Clinics.